HOCHELAGA
SOVEREIGN
CHAPTER ROSE CROIX
MONTREAL

ADDRESS

DELIVERED ON EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 12th, 1914

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To my good friend & Brother
William E Marshall
With the Author's regards

THE LIGHT OF LIFE

An Address

BY

ILLUSTRIOUS BROTHER
REV. ALLAN P. SHATFORD, M.A., 31°
RECTOR OF THE CHURCH OF ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE, MONTREAL

DELIVERED BEFORE

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THE LIGHT OF LIFE

Most Wise Sovereign and Perfect Princes:

I AM to speak to you on the subject of "Light." It is truly a Masonic word. No other word is more frequently used in our ceremonies. It is graven in every paragraph of our ritual, it is the symbol of our morality, it is the keynote of our richest music. By its help we were introduced into the Order, its gracious presence accompanied us through the various degrees, its glory was about us when we reached the exalted position where we stand to-day. No Mason can ever forget the solemn circumstances under which he was brought into the light of brotherhood. About him were the symbolic lights of the altar. Before him were the three great lights of Masonry; in his ears throbbed the ponderous words of the old Book of Genesis, "And God said,

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Let there be light, and there was light." As he progressed in the order, the simple lights of the earlier degrees grew in number and volume, symbolic of the increased truth committed to his keeping. In the "ceremony of the lights" he is reminded of the fuller effulgence of morality and truth which shines about his pathway and draws him on towards perfect manhood. Surely, then, we may lay claim to the high title, "Men of Light"!

And there seems especial fitness to-day for such a subject as I have chosen. For this is Easter Day—the day above all others when the Light of Life streams across our broken way. For the Lord hath risen and "brought life and immortality to light." Without the doctrine of the Resurrection this world would be a dark and dreary place, for "if in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men the most miserable." At the end of our poor struggle there would be nothing but the silence of the grave, the blackness of the tomb. "But now is Christ risen from the death and become the first fruits of them that slept." Gone forever are the dread shadows of the dark valley! To-day our

hearts are full of illuminating hope, our lips tremble with shouts of triumph—we greet each other with the time-honoured salutation, "The Lord is risen."

I cannot, then, make better use of this hour of privilege than to ask your patient consideration of my Parable of Light.

Of the many functions of light let me choose but three as the basis of my address. In this you will at once recognize a fitness, for are there not three great and three lesser lights in Masonry, each with its own significance?

1. The first function of light is *illumination*. It fills the world with brightness. It makes clear all things about us. "In the beginning," a thick and impenetrable darkness hung upon the world until the Great Architect sent forth His fiat. Immediately, the whole universe throbbed with light—all things stood out clear and distinct—and "God saw everything that He had made and behold, it was very good." Have you ever watched a sunrise? Come with me to nature in order that our parable may be made more clear!

Let us take our stand upon some rugged hillside. Above us are the silent citadels of shadow; beneath, the dark depths of rocky canon and cave; over all a thick and sombre veil. Behold, the stars grow paler, the eastern clouds are shot with ruddy gold, the mountain peaks are touched with a soft and tender light. The east grows saffron with the blush of the dawn. Scarlet shafts of sunrise pierce the expectant sky, the slanting sunbeams dart across the rocky ridge, then suddenly the great orb of day seems to leap above the distant horizon. The fire runs from crest to crest, slips down between the mountains into the valleys until every remotest depth and farthest height flings back the light in broken splendour. Can we not read the application? In such a way as this does truth find its way into the hearts of men. The mind is shrouded with darkness—man gropes blindly about, not knowing whence he came or whither he is going. Then the first gleams of truth creep into his soul, he is illuminated with the light of his own perceived destiny, and ere long his whole being is flooded with the new strange light. Take here our

great truth of universal brotherhood—the richest light ever shed from heaven upon the pilgrims of time. How slow the world has been to receive it! In what wilful darkness walked the ancient civilizations! There was no sense of fraternity. So far as the brotherly relations of man with man were concerned, men were in darkness. Very gradually the new truth crept into the world and drove away the clouds of night. Organizations sprang into existence whose duty it was to illumine the world with the light of brotherhood. Chief amongst these was our own order of Freemasonry. And now that the light is ours, we are to send forth its bright beams upon others, until the earth is girdled with the chain of brotherhood.

The light, however, must first illumine our own life! The conscience must be quickened, the judgment must be enlightened. It will not do for us to talk about the blessing of fraternal light whilst all the time we are living unbrotherly lives. That would be like the boat, lying high upon the beach, singing of the glory of the waves and all the while refusing to trust herself upon them! Or like

the poet, chanting the beauties of the sunlight and yet declining to leave his dark and dismal dungeon. Rather will the Mason let the light stream into his own soul and so by his own illumined character be the better fitted to preach the gospel of brotherhood. Every man becomes then a point of manifestation for the light. It is like unto a glow of unlighted candles. Thick darkness hangs about them. But some man brings a burning taper and touches each in turn. The tiny spark burns unsteadily, shivers with each movement of the air, and then settles down into a clear flame—and so the house is illumined. Not otherwise is it with us. We are touched by the light from off the altar and our duty is to make clear the way for stumbling travellers. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in Heaven." The old Greek procession is a good illustration. The leader carried a blazing torch, which in turn was passed from man to man until the host moved forward, a living beam of light. Each man must bear the light. Was not that the Master's mean-

ing when He said: "I am the Light of the World" and then, turning quickly to His disciples, He cried, "Ye are the light of the world." The only method of spreading truth is by each man bearing the light so faithfully that the man next to him may be enabled to kindle his smoking torch and thus the world grow full of enlightened, illumined and illuminating men. Truth is a universal gift—no man dare monopolize it. It is given to us for the purpose of transmission. The hill top which first catches the light of the morning sun dare not selfishly appropriate it. Its very position is one of responsibility. And by its own illumination it will send the light down the shining stairway of the atmosphere into the waiting valley. If God has chosen us to be the first recipients of truth, then He hath also called us to the responsible position of making known His truth to others. Our contacts with men provide the medium through which the light must be transmitted. Let me suppose that some particular message has flashed out of God's life into mine! Shall I hold it to myself? Must I not rather seek out the tallest candlestick in the

house and set the light upon it in order that the other members of the household may see and enjoy it? For its glories and privileges were intended for them as well as for myself. Those who have received the light are but the elder children in the family whose care it must be to bear it to every room and to every member. Such is the responsibility of those whose feet walk upon the shining way. All the compulsions of humanity urge us to let the light shine! This is our first lesson from the Parable of Light—*Illumination.*

2. The second function of light is *Revelation.* Light not only illuminates, it reveals. It does not create the world—it shows us the earth as it finds it waiting here. All the beauties of Nature are made manifest. Without the light, there is no colour, no variety, just one great indistinguishable blackness. But what revelations come as the light grows stronger! Here are the valleys standing thick with corn, the mountains studded with trees, the rivers with curving banks and sunny isles, the rich flowers lifting their chalices perfume-filled, the cities with stately mansions and the villages

with ivy-clad cottages! Glory upon glory breaks upon our wondering gaze until we are overwhelmed by the splendid revelation. Only by continual study and observation are we able to appreciate the marvellous variety of natural beauties! Such is the province of spiritual and moral light! It reveals to us our own exalted destiny as well as that of our brethren. The Masonic institution must serve just this purpose. And we rejoice to discover that this phase of our organization has been given prominent place! For the candidate is continually cautioned to observe the various symbols and ceremonies in order that he may grasp the truth which they are intended to reveal. Let us undertake to point out the nature and character of this revelation.

a. In the first place it must have revealed new powers and capabilities in our own nature. All truth must have a quickening effect upon those who receive it. It must lay bare to our eyes certain possibilities, endowments, faculties of which we were previously unaware. There is a very wonderful bomb mentioned in a modern book. It is so

cunningly constructed as to explode at the very first touch of light. All the coiled-up powers are liberated when the light falls upon it. So truth sets free the locked-up force in man's nature. We do not as yet know our full capacities. Each touch of light reveals some new desire and ambition. It seems to me like some old organ upon which men have played with clumsy hands, beating out only the inferior kind of music. But some day the Master Musician touches the ivory keys and awakes the sleeping soul of the organ and the old cathedral is filled with glorious harmonies. Ever afterwards men hold the instrument in reverence because of the powers which slumber in its heart. Even so God touches the dormant conscience or stagnant soul of some man by the access of a new truth! One is truly sorry for the man who can pass through the beautiful ritual of the Masonic order and not be quickened into new issues. The light has failed, if it has not done some such thing for us. It ought to fill us with a sense of shame for our previous poverty of accomplishment; it ought to awaken new desires, sound for us new calls. This is the

chief power of Christianity! It reveals to man that he is divine—it shows the wondrous possibilities of human nature. The incarnation has no other lesson for us to learn than this; that underneath all the sin and selfishness and shame there is a something not sinful, not selfish, not shameful—the God within us. It rebukes our meanness and wickedness because they are no part of our truest humanity. The indwelling Christ must call into activity every noble faculty and bid man be true to the highest and best. And I have misconceived the Masonic conception of manhood unless it means for you and me that man is God's man. Every upward instinct of the soul teaches us this inspiring fact. Every real yearning of nature for the unattained proves that it is not unattainable, and all man's longing after the ideally perfect points to the supreme certainty that there is in him that which is perfectly ideal. Man and God belong to each other as the sea and the rivers know that they are one. What holier revelation could normal light bring us than this?

b. A second revelation for us is the worth of our fellow-men. If our destiny is so high, we must not refuse to recognize an equal dignity for others. That is the particular function of Masonry—to reveal the Brotherhood of all men. It may have been that once we despised our brethren, or at least were indifferent to them. But under the new light we dare not do that any longer. We are sure now that we forever carry a responsibility concerning our brother. He is God's child just as much as we are. No matter how poor his condition or how mean his outward circumstances, he carries God's image stamped upon his soul and we must, therefore, reverence him. All these unexpected powers which live in him, of which he is ignorant, compel our respect. It is like unto a precious jewel lying in a dark dungeon. Men walk over it or kick it aside because they cannot discern its beauty. But one day it is carried out and set up where the light falls upon it. And then what surprising revelations come! It shines with an undreamed-of brilliancy. Each angle reveals a fresh glory. It is worthy to be worn on the fore-

head of a queen. This is but a feeble illustration of the revealing power of truth. You bring the Christian religion into a heathen land where poor, stunted, half-civilized men dwell. And then watch its operation upon this gross mass of humanity. By and by you marvel at the unsuspected treasures of character hidden beneath the sodden flesh. The dull eyes sparkle with glimmerings of lofty aspirations, and shortly the world is astonished as one spiritual giant stands forth from among the crowd of undeveloped men. The light did it. The new truth awakened him. At this very hour there are huge populations in the Orient winning respect from the western world because the light of heaven hath shined upon them. One might more earnestly desire that such revelation of our brother would speedily come to all the sons of earth. It would break down our foolish barriers and link the race together in golden chains of fraternal affection and good-will.

3. Let me hurry on to the third and chief function of light—*Inspiration*. It sets the world to work. Darkness is the time for rest. "The

night cometh when no man can work." The roar and tumult of life is then silent. But when the first streaks of dawn appear, the sounds of life are heard. The rising sun bids men arise and go forth "to their labour until the evening." How delightfully fresh and inspiring is the morning hour in the country! You hear the creak of the windmills, the hone on the reaper's scythe, the call of the farmer to his horses! Everywhere the light has inspired men to work. It is even more marked in the city. At the first blush of the morning, we hear the rumble of the milkman's cart. The sounds grow fast and furious until the whole city is seething with activity. The daylight hath inspiration for its chief function. And should not all moral and spiritual light inspire men to service? Knowledge must compel labour. Shall our new truths lie upon our hearts like a burden rather than be used as a lever? Each new privilege means another duty. Endowments spell service. If a bird has the faculty of song, it must pour forth its melody upon the air. If the fish is endowed with fins, it must speed through the waters. And

the flower with its brimming cup of perfume must swing like a golden censer and throw its glory across the weary path of men. If our Masonic privileges are not making us better men, filling our days and years with faithful service, then there is something wrong. Each discovery of light lays upon us the responsibility of additional service. We have learned something more of God's Fatherhood—has it made us nobler fathers, better sons? The doctrine of brotherhood has been made more clear to us—are we endeavoring to help our brother realize his manhood? The end of all truth is service. No organization with such lofty principles as ours dares ever to degenerate into an exclusive club. It is meant to help us discharge our duties more thoroughly. History would seem to declare that increase of privilege must mean increase of responsibility. When the light of freedom streamed into the soul of Savonarola, did it not drive him with irresistible power to labour for mankind? When the light of Christianity fell with blinding effect upon Saul of Tarsus, did it not send him with hurried feet across strange

lands in order that nations might be brought into the kingdom? The world has been filled with men who went forth under the inspiration of new truths to conquer and make history. All reformations have been wrought by the dynamic of new ideas. It is service which justifies the truth. Men are slow to read the printed page but they will scan carefully the book of a man's life. "Ye are living epistles known and read of all men." What need have we then to walk worthy of the vocation wherein we are called! The light has inspired us to nobler service. Thus I give you my simple interpretation of the Parable of Light. I have only skirted a little way along the edge of a tremendous subject. We are only yet amid the shadows of time. The perfect revelation of light is reserved for the land beyond the grave. But we have quite enough for our guidance here, if we will only heed the light and try to walk therein. When Goethe died, his last cry was "More light! More light!" That too must be our cry! It is in close sympathy with all that we are taught in Masonry. For her service is progressive and we are

continually moving out of the dim places into the more certain light. I want to close by weaving the doctrine of the Risen Life into all that I have said. Christ had two favorite words--"Light" and "Life". In the Resurrection they were bound together. "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life." Jesus is the *Great Illuminator!* All the dark places have been made clear to us and life now streams with the glory of immortality. He brightens even the tomb of death and paints the rainbow on the cloud of bereavement. He is also the *wondrous Revealer.* For He hath shown to us the lofty character of manhood and pointed us to the immortal crown. He hath "broken the gates of brass and smitten the bars of iron asunder" so that now we catch a vision of the larger life. We are not locked within a narrow harbour edged with drear rocks and dangerous shoals! Through the portals we see the ocean of infinite existence upon whose waves the light f the eternal Presence sparkles like sheen of silver. As we cross the bar the Pilot meets us face to face

and in His company we put out upon the illimitable sea! And Christ is yet again the *Noble Inspirer!* He awakens us to the great tasks of life and fills us with eager energy to finish the work which He hath given us to do. With faithful hearts we serve our day and generation, assured that when the tools drop from our weary hands, the glad acclaim will sound upon our ears: "Well done, good and faithful servants!" Then, and only then, shall all the shadows flee away and we shall walk together with Him in the country where eternal and perfect day reigns, for "there shall be no night there."

"O Love that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in Thy sunshine-blaze, its day
May brighter, fairer be."